

The Effects of Website Trust, Perceived Ease of Use, and Perceived Usefulness on Consumers' Online Booking Intention: Evidence from Taiwan B&B Sector

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to explore the impacts of website trust and the factors included in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) on consumers' online booking intention. The subjects of this study were selected from 30 B&B sectors in Taiwan. Questionnaire was the major tool of this study. After questionnaire collection, the number of valid questionnaire was 359. The structural equation of statistics was utilized for data analysis. The results were obtained as followings: Consumers' website trust would positively influence the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness toward the websites. Consumers' website trust was not positively influence the consumers' online booking intention. Consumers' website trust were not positively influence the perceived usefulness and consumers' online booking intention. consumers' perceived usefulness was positively influence the consumers' online booking intention.

[Yi-Hsuan Lai, Hsiu-Chin Huang, Ruey-Shan Lu, Chia-Ming Chang. **The Effects of Website Trust, Perceived Ease of Use, and Perceived Usefulness on Consumers' Online Booking Intention: Evidence from Taiwan B&B Sector.** *Life Sci J* 2013;10(2):1516-1523]. (ISSN: 1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 205

Keywords: Website trust; perceived ease of use; perceived usefulness; online booking intention

1. Introduction

Along with the dramatic changes in this era, how to effectively improve leisure activities has been viewed as an extremely important issue; it is no more a merely slogan but strongly requires real actions to practice. Consequently, on response to increasing tourism demands of choosing vacation plans to other cities or outbound travel, the domestic tourism industry has been strongly flourishing. Specifically, according to the annual report of the Tourism Bureau, the total number of tourists involved domestic tourism in 2002 were 106,278,000 and sharply increased to 152,268,000 in 2011, achieving the high growth rate of 43.3% in the 10-year period (Tourism Bureau, MOTC, 2012). In addition, the total tourism expenditure in 2002 was \$NT 2,368 billion and reached \$NT 3,103 billion in 2011, achieving an increase of \$NT 645 billion in the 10-year period, indicating the significant rise in Taiwanese citizens' tourism spending behavior (Tourism Bureau, MOTC, 2012). Tseng (2009) points out tourists when engaged in leisure travel have begun to take into account the quality of accommodations due to the fact that the number of people taking holiday travels have risen sharply while there is often no hotel or accommodation available in many popular tourist attractions on holiday. Hence, on response to increasing demands for tourist accommodations, many nearby residents in popular tourist attractions have flexibly begun to use a part of their home space

to provide accommodations that are close to the nature environment or rural life scenes which are tourists' top favorite travel issues.

In this context, the Taiwan government has realized the important role of popular tourist attractions' nearby residents in providing tourist accommodations and the need to substantially increase the number of residential home. As such, in December 12, 2001, the Taiwan government officially promulgated the B&B laws in order to let today's popular B&B industry no longer operates out of the law edge as well as assist the strongly flourishing B&B industry in shaping specific cultures among different tourist attractions and theme-style accommodations (Lin and Liang, 2011). It is noted that current B&B management style mainly utilizes local lands and house construction, in which the construction is mainly different from the style of hotels and hostels in the number of rooms which is set by the Government Decree. In addition, the operation and management of B&B is different from those of hotels and hostels in business philosophy. With main operating emphases of utilizing local resources to shape typical features and effectively incorporating local culture and eco-tourism, natural landscapes, B&B have become the pleasant living environment that bring customers warmth and joy and meet consumer needs.

Lee, Song, and Kang (2008) and Lin and Liang (2011) also point out that most B&B are operated in

small scales in order to provide customers with good services and achieve customer satisfaction, which in turn influences customers' re-visit intention. In addition, once customers have good experience and a high extent of satisfaction, they will be willing to spread out positive word-of-mouth to the public and other people, which in turn effectively helps B&B reach a new customer base. This kind of information exchange is considered extremely influential in recent years since the need of collecting relevant information has been strongly increasing when people carry out travel planning using the network and available websites (Olson and Olson, 2000; Pavlou and Fygenon, 2006). It is acknowledged that travel-related information can be easily obtained from the Internet, for instance, experts' suggestions on tourist attractions, product recommendations, locations of residence, accommodation price and information, surrounding environment. Hence, on recognizing the benefits of these important and useful references, B&B managers have carefully designed and constructed the website contents as well as have proactively joined well-known travel websites since this joint marketing method efficiently allows tourists to easily search their B&B (Tseng, 2009).

Tseng (2009) argues that consumers would surf for online information regarding the pros and cons of the B&B accommodation conditions before making booking decisions since that is an important travel itinerary planning issue. Chien (2001) suggests that the use of e-commerce is suitable and helpful for B&B managers in developing business marketing strategies since it can not only effectively reduce overhead costs but also provide extra useful services such as updated 24-hour weather condition, language conversion, and immediate travel-related answers. In addition, this kind of operation does not require much capital but can still effectively offer consumers with external services, which in turn supports social economic benefits. It is noted that online comments and analysis on the products or brands will strongly affect the content conveyance to the receivers as well as consumers' cognitive attitude, which in turns build up sense of trust and purchase willingness that leads to actual purchase decision behavior (Chatterjee, 2001; Riegner, 2007). It is also noteworthy that along with trust toward the websites, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use will affect consumers' willingness in selecting B&B accommodation. Taking this point, this study aims to target tourists as main research subjects to explore the impacts of website trust and the factors included in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) on tourists' online booking intention. As such, the achieved findings hope to provide B&B managers with better understanding and useful considerations and

references for developing suitable marketing strategies of online shopping and shaping more positive reputation from tourists.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Website trust

In today's e-generation network, the output values of e-commerce keep growing up dramatically, especially in the B2C (Business to Consumer) sector due to great demands from personal consuming market and wealthy business opportunities (Butler and Peppard, 1998). E-commerce has been perceived not only the useful transactions carried out by consumers with the help of internet technology but also the channel that build up consumers' trust toward online sellers (Pavlou, 2003). Wu, Chu, and Fang (2008) define trust as the context that consumers are willing to believe that the sellers are honest and acknowledge their high degrees of reliability during online shopping and transaction processes, which in turn generates consumers' goodwill belief that the sellers are friendly. Heijden, Verhagen, and Creemers (2003) refers trust as the extent of belief that consumers produce throughout using online shopping websites mainly based on the hypermarket's image, performance, good reputation, commitment and emphases toward operating performance, and service attitudes. Brown and Muchira (2004) state that not all consumers will provide personal information to the websites; however, once firms offer stable privacy policies, they will effectively allow consumers to generate more confidence and trust toward the websites to provide more detailed information. Once internet auction lets consumers have higher use tendency, it represents that consumers' trust toward the sellers become higher, which in turns relatively leads to higher online shopping intention (McKnight and Chervany, 2002). Most online shopping consumers generate a sense of trust toward the websites throughout their use; however, the network convenience and sales interaction methods simultaneously generate noteworthy moral problems (Yang Chandrees, Lin, and Chao, 2009). Surprisingly, it is observed that although consumers possibly have the sense of fear and insecurity when carrying out online transactions in the context that the legal terms and conditions of online shopping have not yet been fully developed, there are still a large number of consumers prefer online shopping transaction interface.

2.2 Technology acceptance model

Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) propose that the main purpose of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is to explore the important role of

consumer use behavior toward IT products in explaining and predicting customers' acceptance and use willingness toward the system (Wu and Chen, 2005; Yi et al., 2006; Ngai et al., 2007; Chuttur, 2009). Within the TAM model, Davis et al. (1989) argue that there exists the positive correlation between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In other words, the higher degree of perceived usefulness helps customers generate more positive attitude on using the products and higher perceived ease of use brings customers the sense of ease on using and positive attitude toward the products' usefulness. In the context of online shopping, Zheng (2012) further refers perceived ease of use as customers' perceived ease of operation of the network systems and perceived usefulness as customers' desire to purchase the products/services after satisfactorily using the online shopping.

2.3 Consumers' online booking intention

Zheng (2012) refers online shopping intention as the strength of purchase desire consumers exert through engaging in online shopping. Lin and Lu (2000) through utilizing the technology acceptance model to explore customer usage toward websites finds that perceived ease of use is positively related to perceived usefulness and there is a positive correlation between perceived usefulness and use willingness. In addition, Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003) through combining customer trust and the technology acceptance model to develop the online shopping model put forward that trust has a direct effect on use willingness. Further elaborating, Prasad and Aryasri (2009) employ the shopping environment and trust to investigate the determinants of customers' shopping behavior and how trust generates customers' purchase willingness. Therefore, understanding tourists' trust toward the website contents on choosing accommodation has been considered a very important issue.

2.4 The relations among website trust, technology acceptance model, and online B&B booking intention

Pavlou (2003) through conducting interviews with e-commerce customers argues that consumers' trust has a direct impact on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In addition, Yu et al. (2010) on discussing the impact of trust on consumers' online purchase intention in uncertainty finds that trust positively influences purchase willingness through perceived usefulness. Accordingly, this study proposes that hypotheses H1 that tourists' trust toward the websites will affect perceived ease of use and H2 that tourists' trust will affect their perceived usefulness.

Shih (2004) and Porter and Donthu (2006) through exploring the network usage assumes that perceived ease of use is positively related to perceived usefulness. In line with this, Bertrand and Bouchard (2008) on utilizing the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to discover the relationship patterns among three competing models confirm that perceived ease of use has a direct impact on perceived usefulness. Hence, the hypothesis H3 is proposed that tourists' perceived ease of use toward the network will affect their perceived usefulness.

Peng, Hsu, and Huang (2012) through targeting 413 online business-to-consumer (B2C) customers to investigate the antecedents and consequences of purchase behaviors find that there is positive correlations between online shoppers' perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness and purchase intention. This result is supported by Bertrand and Bouchard (2008) that perceived usefulness has a direct impact on purchase intention and by Yu et al. (2010) that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use exert positive direct impact on purchase intention. Further elaborating, Zheng (2012) indicates that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are effective to understand consumers' expectations toward online shopping. Therefore, this study proposes the hypotheses H4 that tourists' perceived ease of use toward the website will affect their online B&B booking intentions and H5 that tourists' perceived usefulness will affect their online B&B booking intention.

Gefen et al. (2003) and Schlosser, White, and Lloyd (2006) propose that consumers' trust on using the websites is very important since consumers' website trust will affect their purchase willingness for the first time as well as willingness to patronize the websites. Accordingly, this study proposes the hypothesis H6 that online B&B customers' website trust will affect their online booking intention.

In sum, based on the above literature, these following hypotheses were proposed.

- H1: Consumers' website trust has a direct positive effect on perceived ease of use.
- H2: Consumers' website trust has a direct positive effect on perceived usefulness.
- H3: Consumers' perceived ease of use has a direct positive effect on perceived usefulness.
- H4: Consumers' perceived ease of use has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention.
- H5: Consumers' perceived usefulness has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention.
- H6: Consumers' website trust has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research framework

In order to understand consumers' B&B online booking intention, this study aims to combine the concept of website trust and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al., 1989) which includes perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use to establish the causal model with accordant six hypotheses proposed based on the extant literature, then to explore the proposed causal relationships. The relationships among variables are shown in the research framework as in Figure 1.

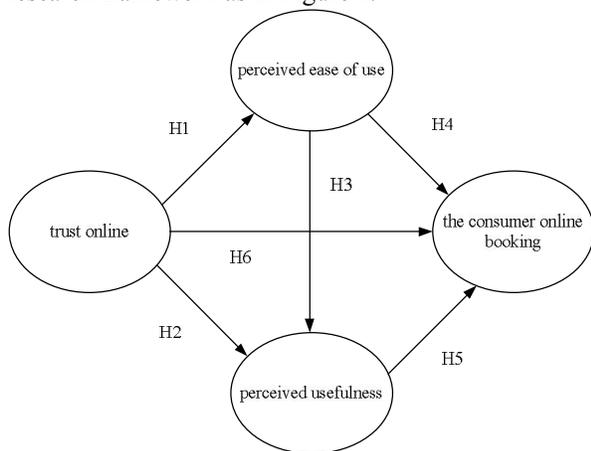


Figure 1. Research framework

3.2 Measurement instruments

The survey questionnaire was utilized as the main research instrument. The questionnaire content was divided into five parts which are (1) Basic information, (2) Website trust scales, in which six questionnaire items were further modified based on references from Gefen et al. (2003) and Wu et al. (2008), (3) Perceived ease of use scales, in which the whole five questionnaire items were modified based on references from Wu et al. (2008) and Tseng (2009), (4) Perceived usefulness scales in which four questionnaire items were further modified based on references from Wu et al. (2008) and Tseng (2009), and (5) Consumers' online booking intention scales, in which the whole four questionnaire items were modified based on references from Wu et al. (2008) and Tseng (2009). All questionnaire items were evaluated using the 5-point Likert scale.

Concerning confirmatory factor analysis for website trust, the results showed unsatisfactory Chi-square value ($\chi^2=37.33$, $p<.05$) while presenting reliable goodness of fit for other model indicators (GFI= .97, SRMR= .03, RMSEA= .09, CFI= .98), implying that the website trust scale achieves construct validity. For reliability, the obtained Cronbach's α value (= .87) is greater than the

recommended value, indicating high internal consistency of the measurement indicators. Hence, reliability of website trust scale was ensured. Regarding confirmatory factor analysis for perceived ease of use, the results showed unsatisfactory Chi-square value ($\chi^2=14.82$, $p<.05$) while presenting reliable goodness of fit for other model indicators (GFI= .99, SRMR= .02, RMSEA= .07, CFI= .98), implying that the website trust scale achieves construct validity. For reliability, the obtained Cronbach's α value (= .89) is greater than the recommended value, indicating high internal consistency of the measurement indicators. Hence, reliability of perceived ease of use scale was ensured. Similarly, confirmatory factor analysis for perceived usefulness, the results showed unsatisfactory Chi-square value ($\chi^2=8.09$, $p<.05$) while presenting reliable goodness of fit for other model indicators (GFI= .98, SRMR= .03, RMSEA= .09, CFI= .98), implying that the website trust scale achieves construct validity. For reliability, the obtained Cronbach's α value (= .80) is greater than the recommended value, indicating good internal consistency of the measurement indicators. Hence, reliability of perceived usefulness scale was ensured. Finally, in terms of consumers' online booking intention, confirmatory factor analysis showed unsatisfactory Chi-square value ($\chi^2=11.72$, $p<.05$) while presenting reliable goodness of fit for other model indicators (GFI= .97, SRMR= .04, RMSEA= .10, CFI= .95), implying that the website trust scale achieves construct validity. For reliability, the obtained Cronbach's α value (= .82) is greater than the recommended value, indicating high internal consistency of the measurement indicators. Hence, reliability of consumers' online booking intention scale was ensured.

3.3 Analysis methodology

This study used SPSS 19.0 and Lisrel 8.80 for data analysis. The LISREL 8.80 software was employed to run the proposed model. The structural equation modeling (SEM) was then utilized to test the theoretical hypotheses (Hair et al., 2010). For model fit assessment of the proposed model, this study follows the ideas of Byrne (1998), Joreskog and Sorbom (1993), and Hair et al. (2010) that the proposed model would be evaluated through overall model fit and fit of internal structure. As such, absolute fit indices (e.g. chi-square (χ^2), goodness of fit index (GFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)), incremental fit indices (e.g. non-normed fit index (NNFI) and comparative fit index (CFI)), and parsimony fit indices (e.g. parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI)) were estimated to assist the evaluation.

4. Results

4.1 The analysis of the SEM model

The results of the overall model's goodness-of-fit analysis showed that the absolute fit indicator χ^2 ($\chi^2(147) = 352.37$, $p = 0.00$) reached a significant level, implying that a discrepancy existed between the covariance matrices of this model and of the empirical data. As such, the model should be rejected since it was easily affected by large samples. However, other achieved values presented converse results. Specifically, regarding goodness-of-fit measures, the SRMR value (.07) was less than the standard value (<.08) and the RMSEA value (.06) was less than the acceptance value (<.08), indicating that the model was acceptable. Regarding comparative fit measures, the NNFI value (.96) was greater than the standard value (>.90) and the CFI value (.97) was greater than the standard value (>.90), indicating the model was acceptable. Regarding parsimonious fit measures, the PNFI value (.82) was greater than the standard value (>.50) and the PGFI value (.70) was greater than the recommended value (>.50), indicating the model was acceptable. Therefore, on the basis that all model fit indicators passed the fitness test, the proposed model was proven to be acceptable.

4.2 Estimation of parameters

Six research hypotheses were proposed in this study. Based on the model's standardized parameter estimation values (Fig. 2), the following hypothesis results were achieved.

- H1: Consumers' website trust has a direct positive effect on perceived ease of use, being reflected through the significant standardized coefficient of .68 ($t=12.01$, $p<.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis H1 is supported.
- H2: Consumers' website trust has a direct positive effect on perceived usefulness, being reflected through the significant standardized coefficient of .37 ($t=4.01$, $p<.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis H2 is supported.
- H3: This hypothesis proposes that consumers' perceived ease of use has a direct positive effect on perceived usefulness. However, the standardized coefficient of .15 ($t=1.73$, $p>.05$) is non-significant. Therefore, the hypothesis H3 is not supported.
- H4: This hypothesis proposes that consumers' perceived ease of use has a direct positive effect on the consumers' online booking intention. However, the standardized coefficient of .16 ($t=1.79$, $p>.05$) is non-

significant. Therefore, the hypothesis H4 is not supported.

- H5: Consumers' perceived usefulness has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention, being reflected through the significant standardized coefficient of .32 ($t=3.85$, $p<.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis H5 is supported.
- H6: This hypothesis proposes that consumers' website trust has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention. However, the standardized coefficient of -.10 ($t=-1.08$, $p>.05$) is non-significant. Therefore, the hypothesis H6 is not supported.

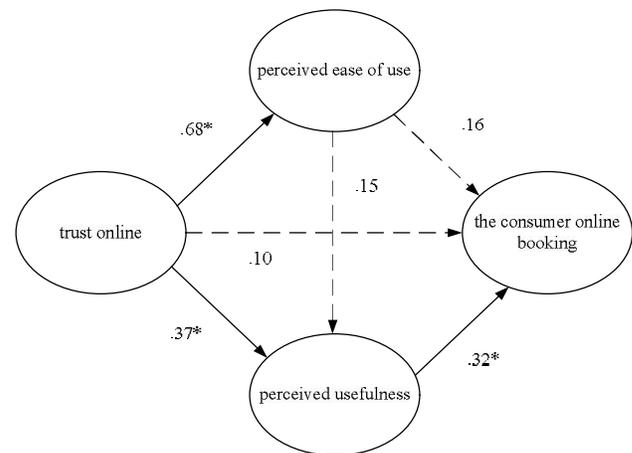


Figure 2. Standardized model parameters
* $p<.05$

Regarding the non-supported hypothesis H6 which considers the influence of website trust on consumers' online booking intention, this study further examines whether there exists a spurious relation or there is actually no relation. The direct correlation analysis result between website trust and consumers' online booking intention as a shown in Figure 3 shows the significant value of completely normalized coefficient of .16 ($t=2.51$, $p<.05$), indicating the significant impact of website trust on consumers' online booking intention. It is noted that perceived ease of use demonstrates that website trust does not directly influence consumers' online booking intention ($\gamma=.02$, $t=0.19$, $p>.05$), implying that website trust indirectly affects consumers' online booking intention through perceived ease of use ($.68 \times .21=.14$). Similarly, perceived usefulness demonstrates that website trust does not directly influence consumers' online booking intention ($\gamma=.00$, $t=0.01$, $p>.05$), implying that website trust indirectly affects consumers' online booking intention through perceived usefulness ($.47 \times .34=.16$).

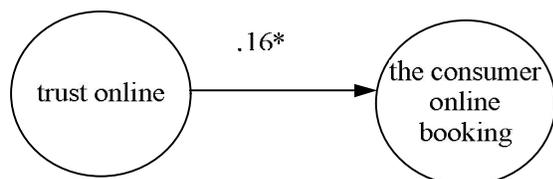


Figure 3. Influence model of trust online and the consumer online booking

Note: * $p < .05$

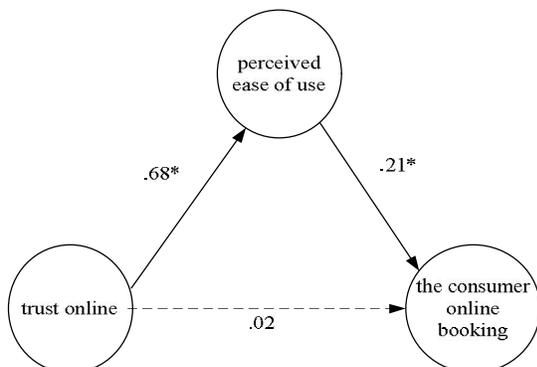


Figure 4. Influence model of trust online, perceived ease of use and the consumer online booking

Note: * $p < .05$

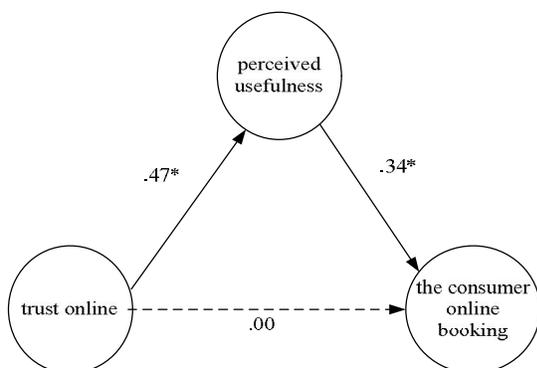


Figure 5. Influence model of trust online, perceived usefulness and the consumer online booking

Note: * $p < .05$

5. Discussion

The analysis results confirm the validation of three hypotheses while rejecting three hypotheses. The explanations for each hypothesis are presented respectively as follows:

5.1 Website trust

The analysis result supports the hypothesis H1 that consumers' website trust exerts a significant impact on perceived ease of use toward the websites. This result is consistent with findings of Pavlou (2003) and Gefen et al. (2003) that website trust has a

positive influence on perceived ease of use. With positive perceived ease of use, tourists recognize the websites' contents and operation are easier to use and to understand, which in turn effectively help reduce the fumbling time on the websites.

The research finding also approves the hypothesis H2 that consumers' website trust has a significant effect on perceived usefulness. This finding is in line with previous studies of Pavlou (2003), Gefen et al. (2003), and Yu et al. (2010). In other words, the more tourists trust the websites, the higher and more effective product purchase would be carried out. On the contrary, due to this coexistence, once customers' trust toward the website decreases, this phenomenon not only requires more marketing costs for building customer trust but also lowers accompanied perceived usefulness.

Regarding the hypothesis H6 that consumers' website trust has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention, the study finding shows that the impact does not reach the significant level. While tourists' trust toward the B&B websites and owners enhances their purchase willingness, the real possible way to improve tourists' online shopping intention is to efficiently and briefly convey products' detailed description in order to assist tourist in their purchase processes. Hence, tourists' website trust does not exert a direct effect on B&B online booking intention; however, tourists' website trust indirectly influences and improves their B&B online booking intention through perceived usefulness.

5.2 Perceived ease of use and Perceived usefulness

Regarding the hypothesis H3 that consumers' perceived ease of use has a direct positive effect on perceived usefulness, the study finding shows that the impact does not reach the significant level, implying that perceived ease of use does not positively influences perceived usefulness. However, a clear understanding of the online shopping website interface can effectively assist consumers in learning more about the purchased merchandises. Therefore, it can be acknowledged that perceived ease of use does not directly affect perceived usefulness but exerts indirect impact through consumers' trust toward the websites.

Regarding the hypothesis H4 that consumers' perceived ease of use has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention, the study finding shows that the impact does not reach the significant level, implying that perceived ease of use does not positively affects consumers' B&B online booking intention. Therefore, on assisting promoting product sales, the ease and convenience of the online shopping interface as well as clear product images

provided by B&B managers and sufficient understanding of tourist demands on online booking intention will be a great help.

The research finding approves the hypothesis H5 that consumers' perceived usefulness has a direct positive effect on consumers' online booking intention, which is in line with previous studies of Bosnjak, Obermeier, and Tuten (2006), Chen and Tan (2004), Davis (1989), Pavlou (2003), Gefen et al. (2003), and Yu et al. (2010). This can be explained that when B&B websites timely provide updated information, they will effectively allow providing visitors with practical contents and messages that are not only conducive to the website operation maintenance and the marketing of new products but also can improve consumers' B&B online booking intention.

5.3 Recommendations

Although demands for network information in this e-generation era is readily available and is strongly increasing, how to effectively utilize network operation and functions to produce maximum customer values remains an important issue due to the difference among customers' personal use of computer and their familiarity. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs that explains people's needs based on physiological basis of demands responding to life reality, it can be understood that on making final decisions of choosing B&B, customers will take into account determinant factors such as website content, the degree of operating difficulty, marketing channels, B&B owners, and whether the B&B is legally registered.

Due to the increasingly rapid development of B&B, the acceptance of Taiwanese tourists toward B&B has also become higher; however, how to build up consumers' trust through positively disseminate information is a critical issue. Hence, B&B managers should design the operating websites in a way that allows customers to use easily and should timely update product information so that visitors can catch up with the latest products. In addition, B&B managers can also post tourists' frequently asked questions on the websites to let more people know; then, through online replies to problems customers can understand B&B's attitude and problem-solving approaches. These activities can be carried out to help tourists comprehend the B&B's problem-solving situations, which in turn form invisible worth-of-mouth. In addition, toward tourists of different ethnic groups, B&B operators should conduct market segmentation in order to better meet various tourists' considerations in selecting B&B. Moreover, different marketing strategies should be established so that

various consumer groups can have more choices of products. As such, B&B can effectively enhance their own competitiveness and improve their positions in the intensely competitive market.

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